

REMARKS

Claim 1 has been amended to recite a 0.5 mm lower limit for the precoat thickness based on the disclosure at page 4, lines 10-11 in the specification. Claim 1 has also been amended to include recitations based on, e.g., the disclosure at page 1, lines 4-6, as well as the disclosure at page 1, lines 22-26 and page 2, lines 7-21, and the disclosure at page 7, lines 29-32 (corresponding to recitations of original claim 32).

Entry of the above amendment is respectfully requested.

Preliminary Matters

Applicants thank the Examiner for the personal interview held on December 31, 2007. Applicants believe that the interview was helpful in advancing the prosecution of this case. A Statement of Substance of Interview is submitted herewith.

Also, Applicants submit herewith a copy of the executed version of the Rule 132 Declaration submitted previously in unexecuted form on October 31, 2007.

Obviousness Rejection

In addition to the remarks presented in the October 31, 2007 Amendment in response to the obviousness rejection, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider the remarks set forth below.

Initially, Applicants note that claim 1 has been amended to include features discussed at the interview to further distinguish the present invention over the cited art. In this regard, Applicants submit that the cited art neither teaches nor suggests the additional requirements recited in amended claim 1, such as the requirement that a number of bright point defects observed under crossed-Nicol having a size of 20 μm or more is 0 defect/5 cm^2 , 10 μm or more

is 10 defects/5 cm² or less, and 5 μm or more is 10 defects/5 cm² or less, a number being an average of five samples of 5 cm² in a width direction.

Also, with respect to the issue of commensurateness discussed at the interview, Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite a 0.5 mm lower limit for the precoat thickness, and submit herewith an unexecuted Supplemental Declaration under 37 C.F.R. § 1.132 including Experiment No. 9A showing the advantageous effect of provided by an invention embodiment with a 0.5 mm precoat thickness (the executed version of the Declaration will be submitted promptly after it is received by the undersigned).

As shown in the sheet attached to the Supplemental Declaration, Experiment No. 11 was conducted as a reference case, wherein filtering was performed without a filtering aid and only by using filtering paper, wherein the filtering paper had an absolute filtering accuracy of 10 μm, and invention Experiment No. 9A provided a filtration life which was more than twice as long as the reference case ($1.1/0.4=2.75$).

When the Supplemental Declaration evidence as discussed above is considered together with the Declaration evidence of record as discussed in the Amendment filed October 31, 2007 and as discussed in the interview, Applicants submit that the present invention provides unexpectedly superior results commensurate in scope with the claimed invention.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the invention as recited in amended claim 1 is not prima facie obvious, and that it is also not obvious because it provides unexpectedly superior results.

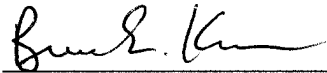
Thus, withdrawal of the obviousness rejection is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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